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smaller than the first edition of its first number.

That we need a high-toned, generously conducted Magazine, which shall be the repository of the labors of the better and elder class of our authors, none can doubt. Our writers of marked genius are many, and their lights ought to burn glorious records on the pages of our literature:—alas! that they do not! Immersed in College recitation rooms, filling pulpits, occupied in the lecture arena, or busy in the pursuit of some “paying” profession, our best minds are not accessible to the reader of current letters—they pass away the precious years in working for the few, not the many; in coining for time, not for immortality. A magazine of the order we have suggested, would stimulate them to expression; would call out their mental resources, and spread such a feast before the great reading public as would direct American taste and studies into noble channels. Think of a Monthly, in whose pages Emerson, Everett, Carey, Longfellow, Prof. Felton, Whipple, Prof. De Vere, Gayarre, Dr. Griswold, Sims, Ripley, Gallagher, Willis, Mrs. Kirkland, Mrs. Robinson, Mrs. Howe, Mrs. Stowe, Lowell, Ticknor, Hawthorn, Hildreth, Judge Conrad, Prof. Agassiz, E. G. Squire, Lieut. Maury, Prof. Page, &c., &c., should be the contributors! Surely, such a corps of writers would authorize the assumption—“organ of the best American mind;” and such a monthly alone as will command their contributions, is worthy of recognition by the American public as the best our popular writers can accomplish.

Our office certainly is not that of “Director of Public Taste;” though, as we have some influence, it is right to speak as the spirit moves, leaving it for the reader to judge of the justice of the hints and strictures we offer. Nothing is set down in malice—we only speak as one of those who have at heart the best interests of Art and Literary taste in America. So long as we have the *materiel* in our midst for great accomplishment, we have each a duty to perform—to talk, think, act, until something shall result to ensure to our national credit. In this respect, we shall try and do our part.

[If what we have now written seems inconsistent with the notice accorded one of the magazines, in our last number, it may be proper to state, that such notice did not meet the eye of the editor until it was in print.]

WHAT IS PLAGIARISM?



THE similarities discoverable in many eminent poems, causes the reader to doubt if there be such a thing as an entirely original poem; while the charges of plagiarism are preferred against our most beloved poets, in such a general, as well as a specific manner, that, at first, we grow to distrust their truthfulness and their genius. But, it becomes us to inquire, since light, and air, and summer, and life, are free; if, also, thoughts of these are not free; if impressions are not free; if emotions awakened by them are not free? If they are, then may there be similarity in many an utterance, and no plagiarism be perpetrated. It is only when the idiosyncracy of the fancy, of the thought, of the emotion, is stolen or adopted, that such a charge will hold good: and the poet may sing freely, so long as it is his own inspiration that is speaking.

In illustration of this point, we might refer to LONGFELLOW’s “Psalm of Life.” This fine poem is regarded as one of the most perfect in the English language; yet, we remember to have seen an analysis of it which produced a parallel for almost every line or couplet—these parallels being drawn from every imaginable source, from the Koran down to the sermons of LORENZO Dow. Who believed that the poet had gone to such sources for the material of that exquisite lyric? The charge of plagiarism, in that instance, was simply preposterous: for the poet probably never saw one-half of the quotations used against him, and what he may have seen of them, probably never recurred to his mind during the composition of the poem, which was simply the utterance by his own heart of lessons and feelings which he had won from a life’s experience: the same thoughts and feelings may have been experienced by others, but they were, nevertheless, as much his own as was the right to think and feel.

The readings of some “Desultory Man” have placed us in possession of an instance in point, which we adopt, since that analysis of the “Psalm of Life” is wanting. Quoting the Epitaph of GRAY’s celebrated “Elegy:”

“Here rests his head upon the lap of earth,
A youth to fortune and to fame unknown;

Fair science frowned not on his humble birth,
And Melancholy mark’d him for her own.”

The following parables are new:

—“How glad would lay me down,
As in my Mother’s lap.”
Milton—*Paradise Lost*, 10, 277.

“On their mother Earth’s dear lap did lie.”
Spenser—*Fairy Queen*, 5, 7, 9

“Or rests his head upon a rock till morn.”
Addison’s *Cato*.

“Reditur enim terræ corpus. et ita locatum ad
situm quasi oportento matris obducetur.”—Cicero
de logibus, 2, 22.

“Gremium matris terrai.”—*Lucretius*, 1, 291.

“Nam terra novissime complexa gremio jam a re-
liqua natura abnegatos, tum maxime, ut mater,
operit.”—Pliny’s *Natural History*, 2, 63.

“Quem tu Melpomene semel
Nascentem placid lumine videris.”
Horace’s *Od*, 4, 3, 1.

“Large was his bounty, and his soul sincere,
Heav’n did a recompense as largely send;
He gave to mis’ry (all he had) a tear,
He gained from heav’n (twas all he wished) a
friend.”
Epitaph, 2d Stanza.

“Large was his soul, as large a soul as e’er
Submitted to inform a body here.”
Cowley, vol. 1, 119.

“His words were simple, and his soul sincere.”
Dryden’s *Ovid*.

“His fame (tis all the dead can have) shall live.”
Pope’s *Homer*, 16, 556.

“No farther seeks his merits to disclose,
Or draw his frailties from their dread abode,
Where they alike in trembling hope repose,
The bosom of his Father and his God.”
Epitaph, 3d Stanza.

“Paventoso speme.”—Petronius—*Son*. 16.

“Spe trepidi”—Lucan, 7, 207.

“With trembling tenderness of hope and fear.”
Funeral Hymn, 473

“Divided here ‘twixt trembling hope and fear.”
Beaumont’s *Psyche*, 15, 314

What man in his sober senses will say that GRAY stole from these sources? Or if he did appropriate, from which, since several have singularly enough fallen upon the thought and almost identical expression, the more modern poet adopted? It certainly were more plausible to believe that the poet, dreaming in the quiet church-yard, had all those impressions; felt all those emotions which he has reproduced in such almost faultless rhythm and perfectness of expression. That he labored through tomes for a thought, an idea, and then studiously dropped it into the stanza, is too incredible for any consideration; and yet, it is just such a theft that mousing critics are occasionally preferring against many an eminent and truly noble poem. Out upon such fault-finding.